

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9981

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 15072

AID FOR CONSTANTINO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SWEL, IT

SUBJECT: GOI REQUEST FOR COLLABORATION ON GEOPHYSICAL STUDY

1. IN THE WAKE OF THE MOST RECENT EARTHQUAKE IN FRIULI (1130 A.M. SEPT 15, 6.5 ON THE RICHTER SCALE) INTERIOR MINISTER COSSIGA, WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR DISASTER MANAGEMENT, CALLED CHARGE THIS AFTERNOON TO REQUEST ASSISTANCE IN MAKING A GEOPHYSICAL STUDY OF THE FRIULI AREA. COSSIGA TOLD US HE FEARS THE SOVIETS MAY OFFER THIS KIND OF COLLABORATION AND GOI WOULD MUCH PREFER, FOR OBVIOUS REASONS, TO COLLABORATE WITH US. IDEALLY, COSSIGA WOULD LIKE AN OFFER FROM THE US GEOLOGICAL SURVEY TO SEND SOME EXPERTS OVER TO CONSULT ABOUT THE SITUATION IN FRIULI WHICH IS BECOMING PSYCHOLOGICALLY VERY DAMAGING. THE LIMITED RECONSTRUCTION ACCOMPLISHED AFTER THE MAY 6 EARTHQUAKE WAS LARGELY WIPED OUT IN THE EARTHQUAKES ON SEPTEMBER 11. NOW, TODAY, THERE IS A NEW QUAKE WHICH DAMAGED A DIFFERENT AREA. FORTUNATELY, THE NUMBER OF DEATHS HAS BEEN SMALL BUT REPORTS INDICATE THAT PROPERTY DAMAGE HAS BEEN EXTENSIVE.

2. FRANKLY, THE PEOPLE IN THE REGION ARE BECOMING EXTREMELY UPSET BY THE SEEMINGLY ENDLESS SERIES OF MAJOR EARTHQUAKES. CLEARLY, COSSIGA WANTS TO SHOW THAT THE GOI IS SEEKING THE BEST

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ADVICE AVAILABLE AND WANTS US HELP. THIS IS IN OUR INTEREST AND

WE STRONGLY SUPPORT A POSITIVE RESPONSE. COSSIGA WAS TOLD THAT WE WOULD FORWARD HIS REQUEST TO WASHINGTON BUT A REPLY MIGHT TAKE A COUPLE OF DAYS. WHEN ASKED HOW LONG BEFORE THE SOVIETS MIGHT MAKE THEIR OFFER OF SCIENTIFIC ASSISTANCE, COSSIGA SAID IT MIGHT HAPPEN ON SEPT 16, BUT HE WOULD TELL THE RUSSIANS THAT HE WAS ALREADY TALKING TO THE AMERICANS ABOUT THIS ASPECT OF THE PROBLEM.

3. IN VIEW OF OUR PRESENT EXTENSIVE COMMITMENT FOR THIS DISASTER, WE STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD NOT RISK BEING UPSTAGED BY THE SOVIETS ON THE SCIENTIFIC SIDE IN A MOVE WHICH COULD HAVE A STRONG IMPACT ON PEOPLE WHO ARE ON THE EDGE OF DESPAIR. OBVIOUSLY COSSIGA'S URGENCY REFLECTS HIS OWN TENSIONS. NOTWITHSTANDING, WE WOULD LIKE TO BE ABLE TO TELL COSSIGA TOMORROW MORNING THAT WE ARE PREPARED PROMPTLY TO SEND A SMALL GROUP OF EXPERTS TO ITALY TO DISCUSS A SURVEY WITH ITALIAN SEISMOLOGISTS. THIS WILL NOT COST MUCH AND WILL BE SEEN BY ITALIANS AS RESPONDING TO THEIR DEEPLY FELT NEEDS.

4. WE WILL BE TALKING WITH DR. CAPUTO, THE ITALIAN DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE OF GEOLOGY AND GEOPHYSICS WHO HAS BEEN NAMED BY COSSIGA AS THE POINT OF CONTACT ABOUT SPECIFIC DETAILS AND WILL REPORT ASAP. BEAUDRY

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